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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANTANANARIVO 000868

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E MARIA BEYZEROV  
PARIS FOR WALLACE BAIN  
LONDON FOR PETER LORD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/04/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MA](#)

SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR'S TGV: MAPUTO PROCESS DEAD, EYES TURN  
TO MILITARY

REF: A. ANTANANARIVO 858

[1](#)B. ANTANANARIVO 853

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Madagascar's transition president Andry "TGV" Rajoelina formally has ended the troubled mediation and consensus-building process that has struggled haltingly forward since international mediators first arrived here in February. In a televised interview on December 16, he outlined his plan to hold legislative elections on March 20, stating that his current government would manage the country in the interim. This follows a presidential communique issued on December 15, in which he presented arguments on the "impossibility of cohabitation", and is consistent with his warning to ambassadors on December 9. The December 11 ministerial note barring the return of the participants in the December 3 Maputo III conference remains in effect, but he did offer hope that it would be lifted in the near future (as well as an admonition for them to behave if they want back). Whenever they do come back, the stranded politicians, including the co-presidents, will not be returning to government; whether transition Prime Minister Mangalaza is also jobless is entirely unclear. In his address, TGV attempted to paint the end of AGOA as a sanction that would harm only the Malagasy people, again shrugging off any responsibility for its termination.

[1](#)2. (C) Over the coming weeks, the military will struggle to reconcile the nation's desire for a calm holiday season with their recognition that Rajoelina's latest unilateral position has the strong potential to push the worsening political and economic crisis to the boiling point; supporters of a military intervention appear increasingly likely to prevail, though their probable timing is unclear. Equally unclear is how the so-far-mute opposition movements eventually will react, as they balance the possibility of complete exclusion from a shortened transition with the pervasive fatigue that dominates public opinion; our guess is that they will react strongly, at the time of their choosing, and that prospects for consensus around TGV's latest proposal are nil. Now -- before the next escalation in January -- is the ideal time to push the international community into applying more pressure through further sanctions and assistance cuts, and beginning the conversation on targeted sanctions against individual members of TGV's movement. The status of the ICG-Madagascar process is also now unclear, although the need for an

international consultation mechanism -- with or without the Malagasy -- is now stronger than ever. END SUMMARY.

RAJOELINA: "COHABITATION IS IMPOSSIBLE"

13. (SBU) After a long day of rumors that the travel ban on Maputo III participants would be lifted, and a week of uncertainty over the long-term intentions of his fractious administration, Rajoelina took to the airwaves on December 16 at 2000 for over an hour to definitively quell speculation. He called for a "truce" over the holidays, and claimed that was the reason the planned December 17 ICG meeting had been postponed (or cancelled?). His version of a truce, however, turned into a unilateral -- and seemingly final -- break from the five-month long "Maputo process" that had resulted in agreement on a plausible, if troubled, unity government in Addis Ababa on November 7. Per the speech, Rajoelina's current unilateral cabinet will remain in place until legislative elections are held on March 20, 2010, at which point the majority party will select a Prime Minister and form a government. The re-entry ban remains in place at this writing, until such a time as unspecified security conditions are met, and when those stranded in South Africa "act responsibly, wisely, and with respect to national solidarity".

14. (SBU) Rajoelina requested that the international community "not get too involved in Madagascar's problems", painting the unsuccessful negotiations thus far as a failure of international mediation and suggesting that the Malagasy themselves can now take over from it. He stated that the

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March elections will be financed with GOM funds, and announced that the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) would be set up with the assistance of "politicians" (representing perhaps the only salvaged part of the Maputo accords), but refrained from elaborating on the extent to which opposition parties would have a say in its design. On AGOA, he asserted that its termination -- which he still seems to think can be avoided -- would be a "reprisal" against the Malagasy people, and requested that the U.S. consider "the Malagasy people" who need the assistance most.

THE MILITARY: HAPPY HOLIDAYS?

15. (C) Rajoelina limited his commentary on the military to simply saying that "it is not divided, and there is no war here", glossing over an unauthorized December 15 press conference by nine colonels in support of the Maputo process, which has publicly raised fresh concerns of division in their ranks. A potentially violent confrontation between them and other colonels loyal to TGV was only narrowly averted in the hotel where the conference occurred, and this required the direct personal intervention of Army Chief General Andre. The Ambassador met with the CHOD immediately after he returned from this incident, at the CHOD's urgent request. The CHOD was indirect and meandering in laying out his grim perception of the current political landscape, repeating several times the likelihood of a "social explosion" and suggesting that he might have to get involved to stave it off. Rumors to that effect are rampant, but there is still no evidence of unmanageable divisions sizable enough to cause a rupture in the armed forces such as seen in March 2009. Calling the army "the last rampart," General Andre seems willing to intervene only if he believes there is no other alternative.

16. (C) However, two broad trends have emerged. First, the military has no desire to disrupt the holiday season, and will seek to avoid action as long as there is any plausible reason to postpone. This dilatory principle has generally guided their behavior through many months now of alleged intervention plans. Second, however, is a concern that Rajoelina grossly overplayed his hand with irresponsible behavior over the last week, and a belief that intervention

now could forestall greater opposition unrest in the coming weeks. If it turns out that Rajoelina did just cross a red line sharply worsening the political and economic crisis (and here the pending AGOA announcement may be key), supporters of military intervention may prevail, regardless of the holidays; some may also see tactical advantage in doing so. While the CHOD and Minister of the Armed Forces fall into the camp supporting a wait-and-see approach, this second option appeals to some military and civilian leaders who have been sidelined since March 2009. While this timing issue remains unclear, what is clear is that the military is now the only force capable of restoring order, now that TGV has ordered the international community to butt out. Their intent in restoring order would be to do so bloodlessly.

#### THE OPPOSITION: ANGRY, BUT IMPOTENT

17. (SBU) The shared exile of the Maputo III participants has served only to boost their solidarity in the face of Rajoelina's intransigence. There have been no large protests or civil disobedience in recent weeks (aside from continuing peaceful, daily meetings of some of Ravalomanana's supporters), but supporters of Zafy in particular have been traveling to Antananarivo to get better organized in the absence of their leadership. A planned meeting of the three movements opposing TGV was thwarted in Tamatave on December 16. After six months of relative calm in the capital, however, it is not clear how much support they can rally for renewed protests, particularly with the holidays approaching, nor is it clear that they have any other leverage against Rajoelina's regime.

#### A NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

18. (C) COMMENT: With the Maputo process now formally dead, we

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will engage with the local international community in Madagascar to examine possible ways forward. With AGOA all but terminated, MCC gone since November, our non-humanitarian programs suspended, and all IFI assistance frozen, the USG has little further financial leverage in Madagascar. France, however, has yet to freeze or terminate any of its extensive programs, including military cooperation. Likewise, the European Commission has stretched the Cotonou Article 96 process well beyond the original November 6 deadline; now would be an ideal time for them to take a firm stance and make cuts (which the German ambassador told us today will happen in short order after the holidays). In addition, we believe that it is now time to begin discussing targeted travel and financial sanctions against Rajoelina and his regime with SADC, the African Union, and our key partners.

19. (C) At time of writing, reaction to Rajoelina's rupture has been limited to relatively bland press reports; we expect more substantive commentary over the next 48 hours, but also perceive an artificial restraint caused by the continuing travel ban and the general desire not to upset the coming holidays. We will meet December 18 with COMs from France, Germany, Mauritius, South Africa, the EU, and the United Nations to discuss their reactions. Here and in capitals, it is important to maintain unity within the international community, particularly if Rajoelina takes to fanning the AGOA flame over the next two weeks; if he does, we must demand solidarity from our partners in the form of strong statements and additional consequences for TGV's new approach. The messy ICG-Madagascar process that has existed since April is now also in doubt, although the need for some international consultation/coordination mechanism -- with or without Malagasy assent and/or participation -- is now greater than ever. END COMMENT.

MARQUARDT